

Message Text

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SUBJ: POTENTIAL US CANDIDATE FOR WMO SECRETARY GENERAL, DR.
ROBERT M. WHITE

REF: 77 STATE A-4949

1. EMBASSY WAS APPROACHED BY SAMUEL MBELE-MBONG, GURC DIRECTOR OF METEOROLOGY, TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE CANDIDACY OF DR. ROBERT M. WHITE FOR WMO SECRETARY-GENERALSHIP. ECONOFF INFORMED MBELE-MBONG ALONG LINES REF A THAT ONLY IF DR. DAVIES SHOULD DECIDE NOT TO RUN WOULD U.S. CONSIDER PUTTING FORWARD CANDIDACY OF DR. WHITE. MBELE-MBONG SAID THAT AT RECENT NAIROBI REGIONAL WMO CONFERENCE HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY FRENCH DELEGATE, WHO REVEALED THAT THERE IS EMERGING CONSENSUS AMONG EUROPEANS TO THE EFFECT THAT TIME HAS COME FOR DR. DAVIES TO STEP DOWN. IF NECESSARY FRENCH FEEL HE SHOULD BE PERSUADED TO DO SO. FRENCHMAN FURTHER STATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD DR. DAVIES WILL ONLY AGREE TO WITHDRAW IF HE IS ASSURED THAT HE WILL HAVE QUOTE ACCEPTABLE UNQUOTE SUCCESSOR,
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SUCH AS DR. WHITE. REPORTEDLY, EUROPEANS WOULD ALSO FAVOR WHITE CANDIDACY.

2. MBELE-MBONG STATED THAT HE PERSONALLY BELIEVED THAT DR. DAVIES SHOULD STEP DOWN. HE FEELS STRONGLY THAT AT THIS TIME WMO IS IN NEED OF NEW BLOOD AND OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP. FURTHER, ON THE BASIS OF HIS SOUNDINGS MBELE-MBONG BELIEVES

THAT MOST AFRICANS WOULD AGREE WITH THIS POSITION. HE PERSONALLY SUPPORTS CANDIDACY OF DR. WHITE BUT ON THIS ISSUE DOUBTS THAT OTHER AFRICANS FEEL THE SAME. HE SAID THAT NIGERIAN MEMBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS PERSONAL FRIEND OF DR. WHITE BUT AT SAME TIME NIGERIAN IS CONVINCED THAT WHITE CANDIDACY WOULD MEET WITH MUCH

OPPOSITION. MBELE-MBONG SPOKE WITH BOTH ETHIOPIANS AND ALGERIANS AT NAIROBI AND HE SAID BOTH WERE QUOTE VIOLENTLY UNQUOTE OPPOSED TO CANDIDACY OF DR. WHITE. HE CLAIMS THAT MOST AFRICANS STRONGLY PREFER TO NOT HAVE OTHER US OR USSR OCCUPY SECRETARY-GENERALSHIP OF WMO BECAUSE THEY FEEL THIS WOULD QUOTE BREED SUSPICION UNQUOTE AND LEAD TO SUPERPOWER DOMINATION. THEY WOULD PREFER A WEISS (AUSTRIA) OR SCHNEIDER (SWITZERLAND) CANDIDACY SINCE BOTH COME FROM NEUTRAL COUNTRIES.

3. MBELE-MBONG PLANNING TO ATTEND EXECUTIVE SESSION IN GENEVA IN JUNE. HE IS CURRENTLY SOUNDING OUT MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (WHICH COVERS WMO) ON WHAT WILL BE AN OFFICIAL GURC POSITION. SUGGEST U.S. DELEGATION TO EXECUTIVE SESSION MEET WITH MBELE-MBONG IN GENEVA. HE LIKES AMERICANS, (TO THE EXTENT THAT HE MARRIED ONE WHILE WORKING ON HIS PHD AT COTORADO STATE UNIV), FOLLOWS WMO CLOSELY, AND APPEARS TO HAVE GOOD CONTACTS AMONG AFRICANS. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW AND REPORT.MITHOEFER UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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